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THE TRANSFORMERSTM

SPOTLIGHT



REVELATION: PART TWO

HARDHEAD

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THE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT



REVELATION: PART TWO

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Nick 08



REVELATION

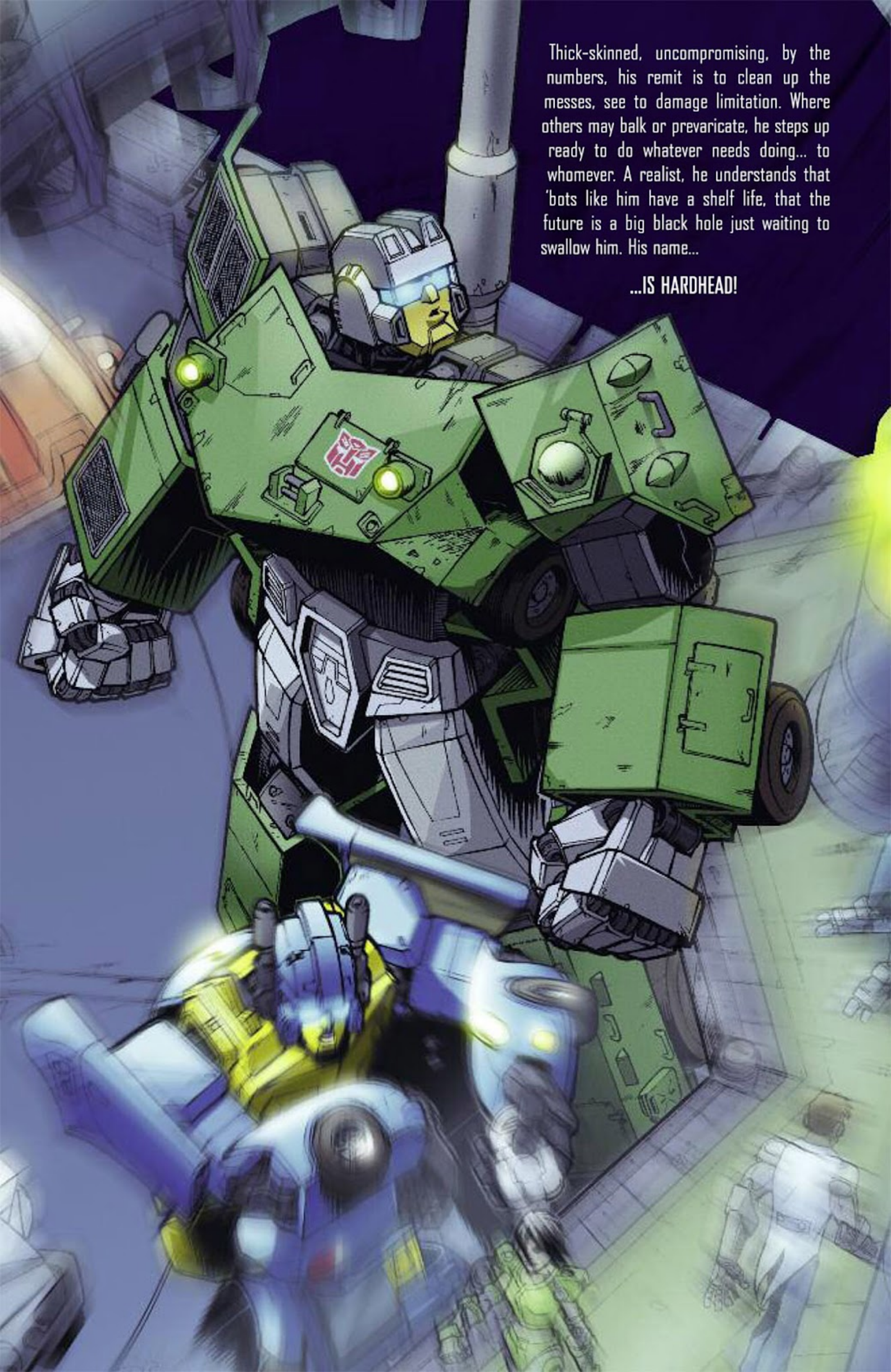
STORY SO FAR...

Corata-Vaz, a seemingly inconsequential planet in the far reaches of space, has become the front line in the battle against an incursion from a long-dead dimension. There, ancient Cybertronian CYCLONUS has activated both the monstrous, unstoppable THUNDERWING and a Nega-Core, an integral part of a cosmic event known as The Expansion. Meanwhile, Autobot investigator NIGHTBEAT probes his own missing memories of a planet called Gorlam Prime, unaware that it and he are facets of the master plan of NEMESIS PRIME...

PHASE FOUR CONTINUES...

CYCLONUS





Thick-skinned, uncompromising, by the numbers, his remit is to clean up the messes, see to damage limitation. Where others may balk or prevaricate, he steps up ready to do whatever needs doing... to whomever. A realist, he understands that 'bots like him have a shelf life, that the future is a big black hole just waiting to swallow him. His name...

...IS HARDHEAD!

ARK-32:

I LET *NIGHTBEAT* DO ALL THE TALKING.

IT'S NOT JUST THE *MISSING* MEMORIES I'M CONCERNED ABOUT...

...IT'S MY *ENTIRE* STATE OF MIND!

IF SOMETHING *ELSE* WAS DONE TO MY NEURAL PROCESSOR, I COULD EASILY BE A DANGER TO YOU AND OTHER AUTOBOTS.

I INTEND TO RETRACE MY STEPS, FIND OUT EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED IN THOSE DELETED CYCLES, BUT I NEED YOU WITH ME.

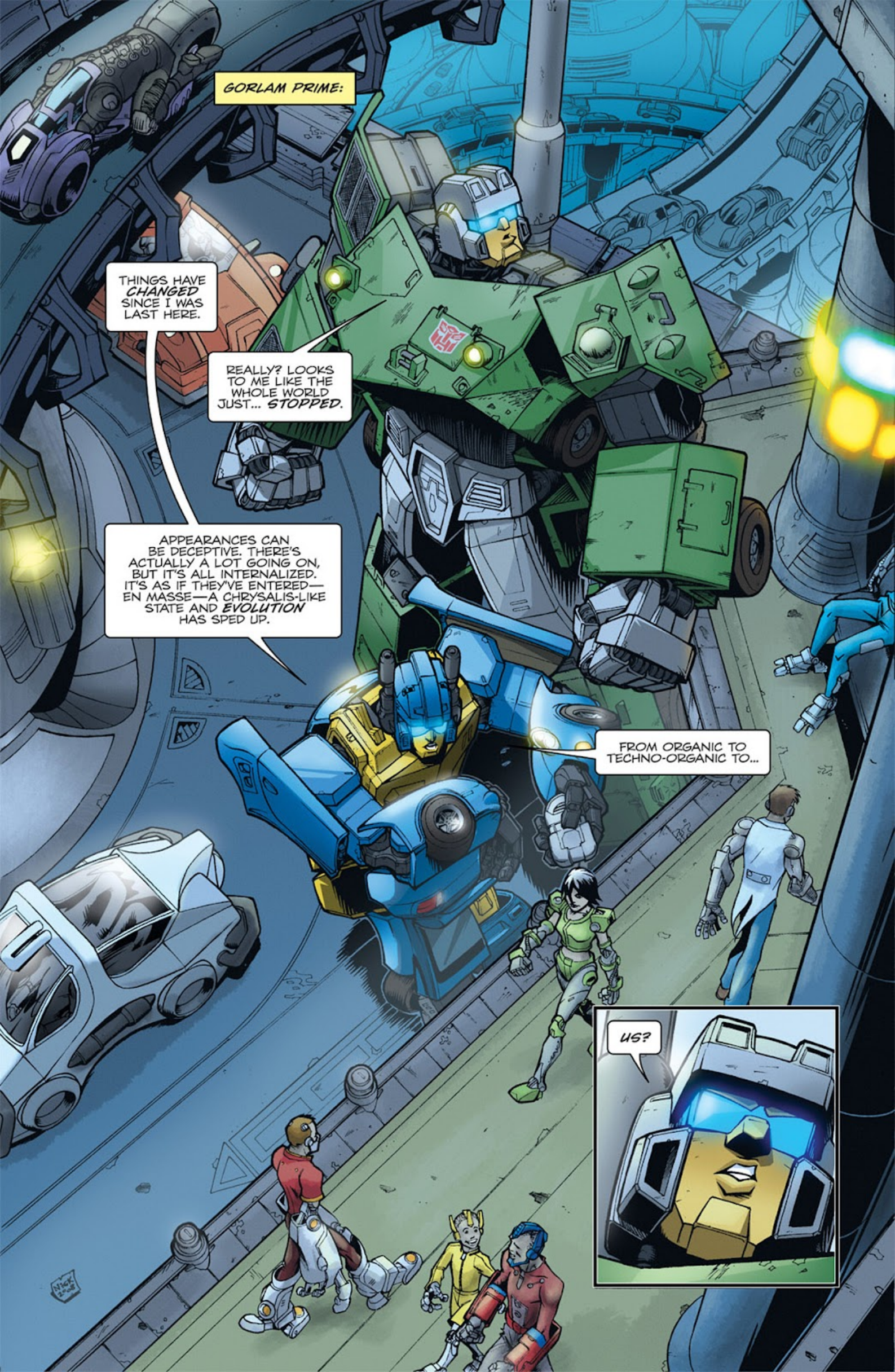
I WANT YOU TO WATCH ME LIKE AN ARDURIAN ROC, AND IF I LOSE CONTROL, EVEN FOR AN INSTANT...

...ELIMINATE ME.

SURE.

HARDHEAD—
'BOT OF FEW WORDS.

SO, WHERE DO WE START?



GORLAM PRIME:

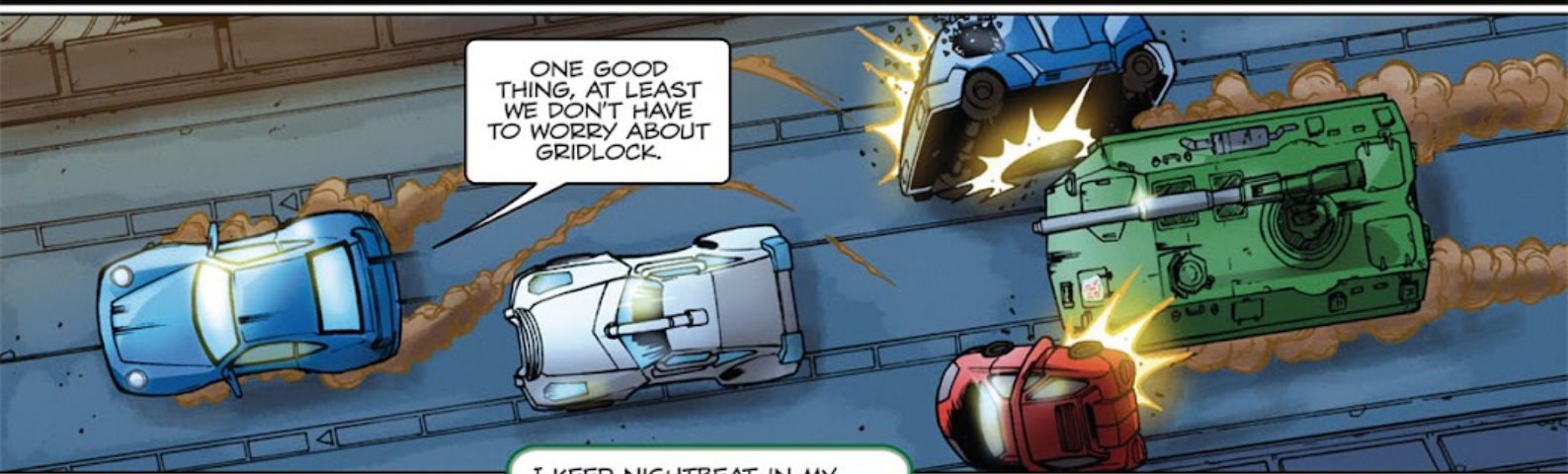
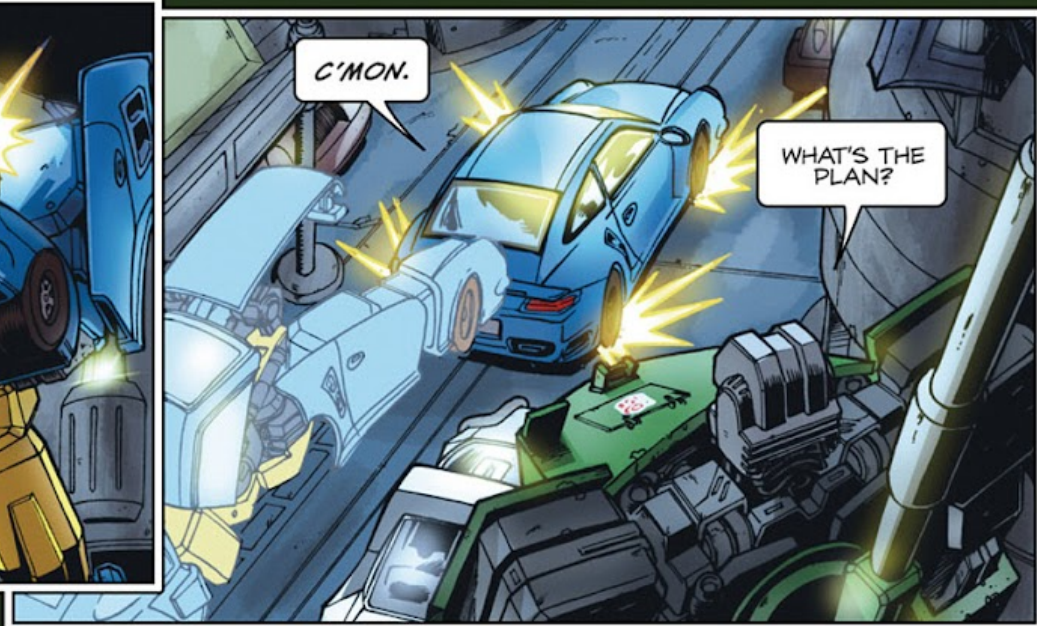
THINGS HAVE
CHANGED
SINCE I WAS
LAST HERE.

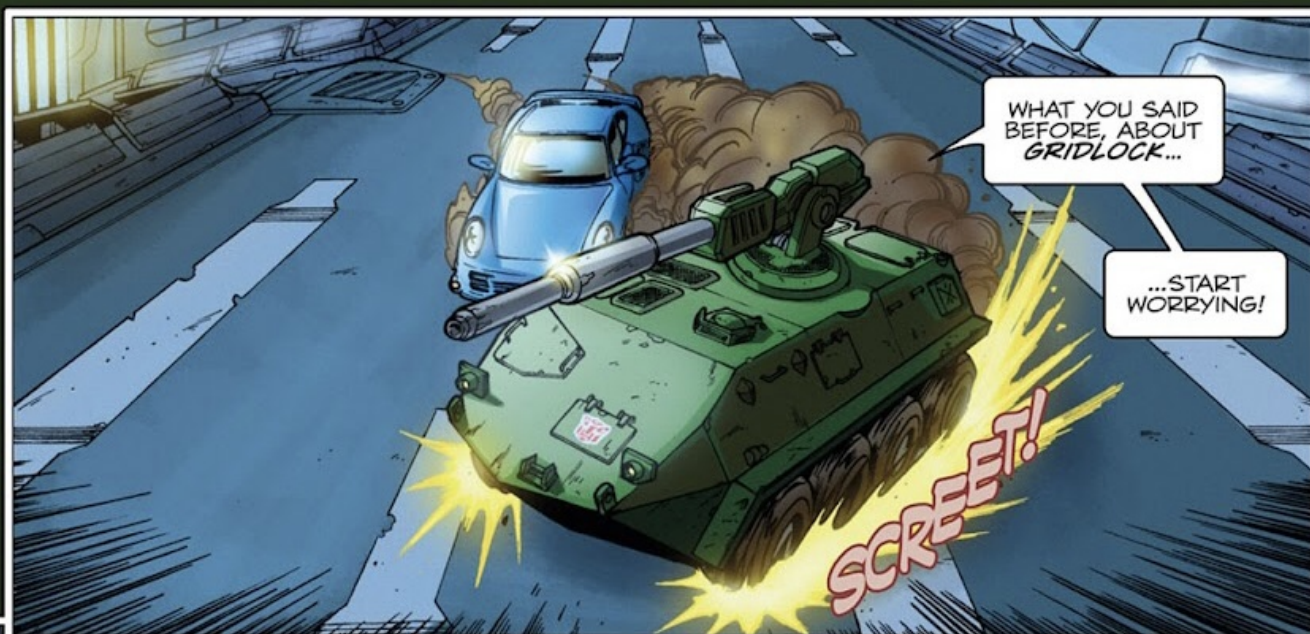
REALLY? LOOKS
TO ME LIKE THE
WHOLE WORLD
JUST... *STOPPED*.

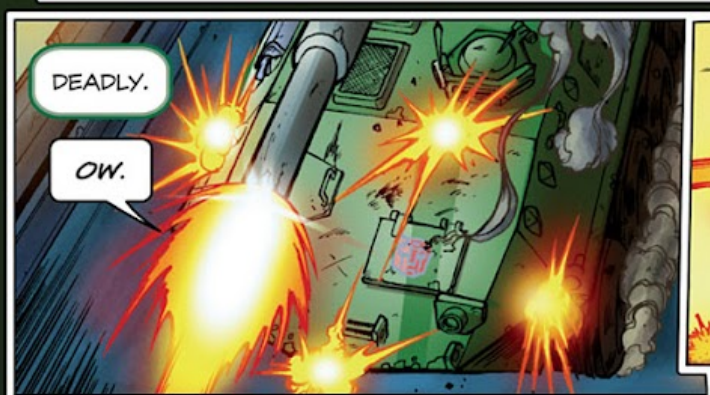
APPEARANCES CAN
BE DECEPTIVE. THERE'S
ACTUALLY A LOT GOING ON,
BUT IT'S ALL INTERNALIZED.
IT'S AS IF THEY'VE ENTERED—
EN MASSE—A CHRYSALIS-LIKE
STATE AND *EVOLUTION*
HAS SPED UP.

FROM ORGANIC TO
TECHNO-ORGANIC TO...

US?









WE'RE PENNED IN!
TOUGH AS I AM, THERE
ARE *LIMITS* TO HOW
MUCH PUNISHMENT I
CAN TAKE.

WHEREAS I...



...APPEAR TO BE
OFF-LIMITS.

WHICH, WORRIINGLY,
TENDS TO BACK UP
MY SUPPOSITION THAT
THERE'S SOMETHING
ELSE IN STORE
FOR ME.



WE GOTTA
GO!

WHERE?



DOWN!

THIS'LL BUY US SOME
TIME, BUT I'M NOTHING
IF NOT A REALIST.
EVENTUALLY, EVERYONE...

...RUNS *OUT* OF
PLACES TO GO.





CORATA-VAZ:

"IT'S HOPELESS."



"FUTILE."



"SUICIDAL!"

GARRUS-9
PENITENTIARY:

I KNOW,
PROWL. BUT IF
THEY DIDN'T AT
LEAST TRY...

...THEY WOULDN'T
BE *THE WRECKERS*.

I GUESS. IT JUST SEEMS
TO ME WE'RE WASTING
PRECIOUS TIME. THIS, THE
MONSTRUCTOR MESS...
IT'S LIKE EVERYTHING'S
COMING AT US AT ONCE!

TRUE. BUT ABOVE
AND BEYOND THE
BRAWN...

JETFIRE,
ANYTHING?

...WE HAVE
BRAIN.

WELL, THERE'S
A *BIG* ENERGY SPIKE
COMING FROM THAT
CAVERN *THUNDERWING*
IS GUARDING, BUT IT'S
DEFEATING OUR BEST
EFFORTS TO
CATEGORIZE IT.

ON THE PLUS
SIDE, I'VE HAD SOME
INTERESTING FEEDBACK
FROM *OMEGA SUPREME*
ON OUR MYSTERY
CYBERTRONIAN...

I RAN TAC-CAPTURE
IMAGES PAST HIM FROM
THIS RECENT ENCOUNTER
AND THE STRIKINGLY
SIMILAR ONE ON
CYBERTRON. HERE, I'LL
PLAY IT BACK FOR YOU...

HIS NAME
IS *CYCLONUS*...
THE OTHER IS
GALVATRON. BOTH
WERE ABOARD THE
FIRST ARK ALONG
WITH *NOVA
PRIME*.

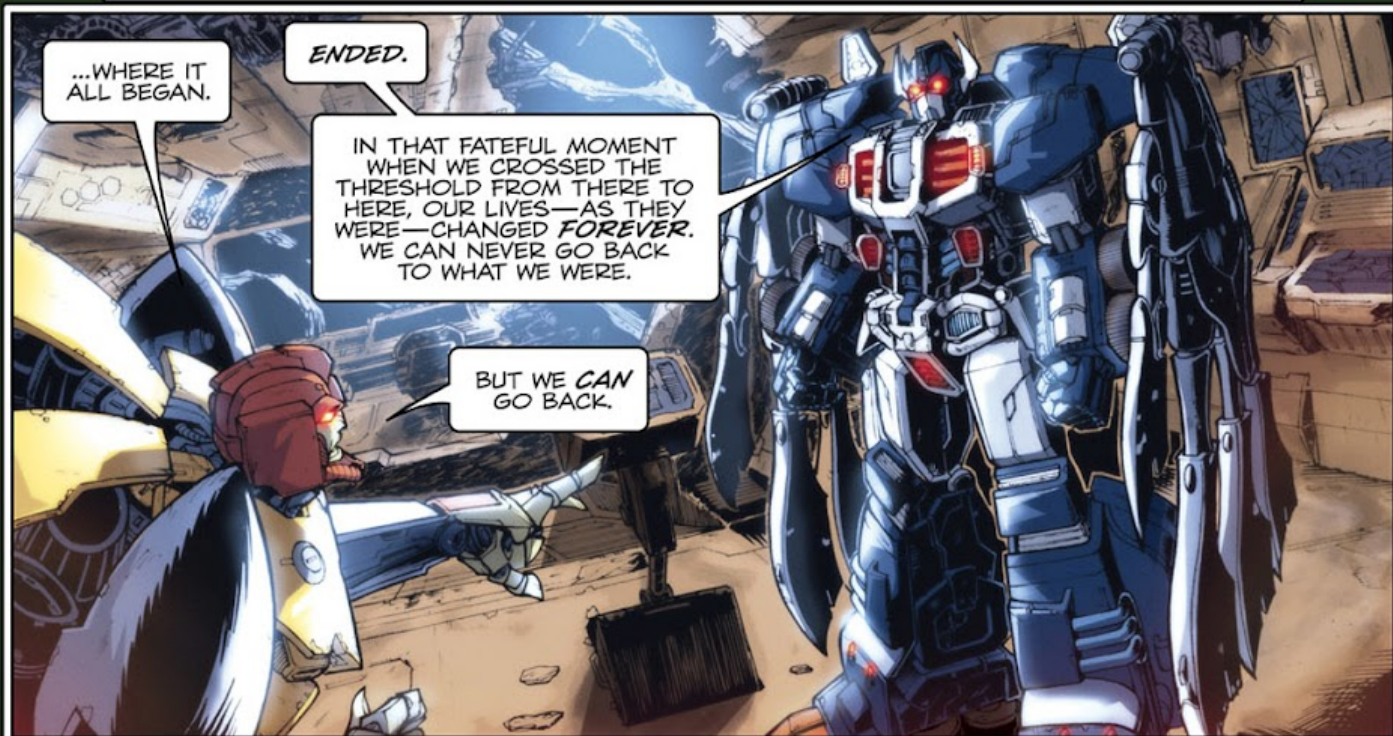
IT ALL KEEPS
COMING BACK TO
NOVA. THE FIRST ARK'S
DESTINATION WAS THE
BENZULI EXPANSE,
SO...

...THAT'S
WHERE WE'LL
START.

THE DEAD
UNIVERSE:



I THOUGHT
I'D FIND YOU
HERE...



...WHERE IT
ALL BEGAN.

ENDED.

IN THAT FATEFUL MOMENT
WHEN WE CROSSED THE
THRESHOLD FROM THERE TO
HERE, OUR LIVES—AS THEY
WERE—CHANGED **FOREVER**.
WE CAN NEVER GO BACK
TO WHAT WE WERE.

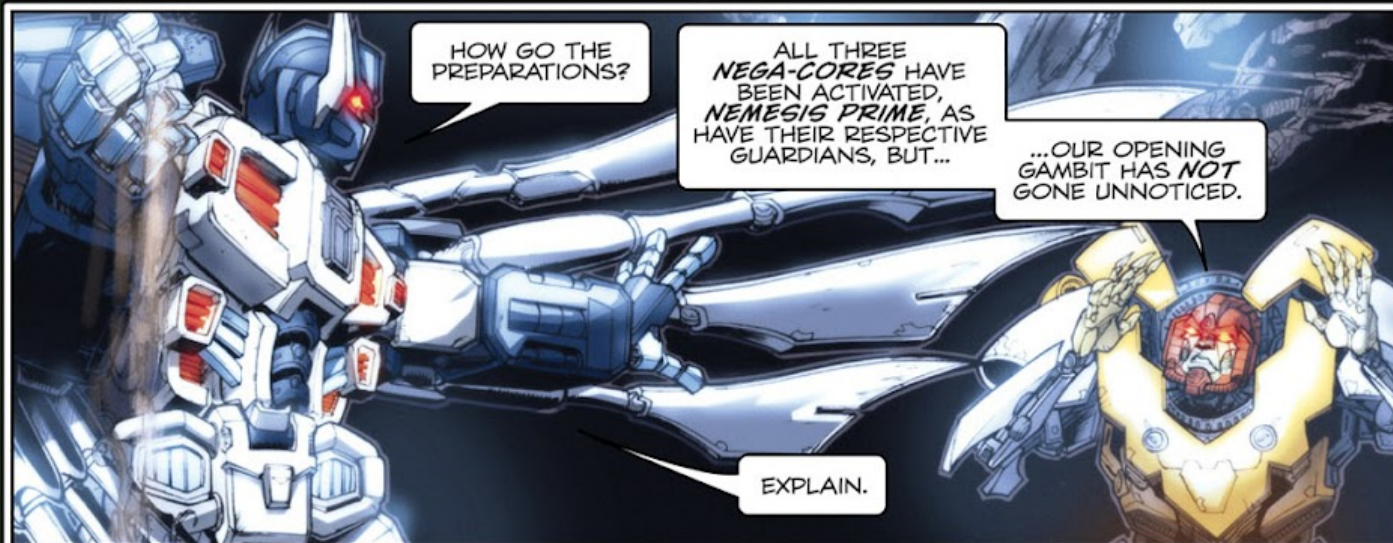
BUT WE **CAN**
GO BACK.



YES. THANKS TO YOU,
JHIAXUS, OUR LONG EXILE
IN THIS FORSAKEN PLACE OF
FOSSILIZED TEARS IS NOW
ALMOST OVER. FINALLY, WE
SHALL RETURN TO THE
LIGHT, BUT TAKE WITH US...



...THE
DARKNESS!



HOW GO THE
PREPARATIONS?

ALL THREE
NEGA-CORES HAVE
BEEN ACTIVATED,
NEMESIS PRIME, AS
HAVE THEIR RESPECTIVE
GUARDIANS, BUT...

...OUR OPENING
GAMBIT HAS **NOT**
GONE UNNOTICED.

EXPLAIN.



CYCLONUS DREW UNWANTED ATTENTION ON WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN A CLANDESTINE INCURSION. I STRONGLY SUSPECT HE *EXCEEDED* HIS REMIT. AND, SOMEHOW...

...NIGHTBEAT HAS FOUND HIS WAY *BACK* TO GORLAM PRIME.

THE SITUATION ON CORATA-VAZ IS REGRETTABLE BUT ULTIMATELY CONTAINABLE. THUNDERWING IS THE VERY EPITOME OF UNSTOPPABLE FORCE AND IMMOVABLE OBJECT.

HOWEVER, THE EXPOSURE OR LOSS OF NIGHTBEAT AT SUCH A CRITICAL STAGE WOULD ENTAIL *DIRECT* ACTION ON MY PART, SOMETHING I WISH TO AVOID AT ALL COSTS. JHIAXUS...

...SEE TO THIS *PERSONALLY!*





GORLAM PRIME:

THIS IS *IT*—
EXCAVATION SITE
NUMBER 4.

UH-HUH.
LOOKS *REAL*
WELCOMING...



ALL CLEAR.
LET'S GO...

IT WAS AT THIS
POINT I SENT THE
CARRIER-WAVE SUMMARY.
FROM HERE ON IN...

HM?



...IT'S ONE
BIG *BLANK!*



NIGHTBEAT—
MOVE!

WE GOT
COMPANY!

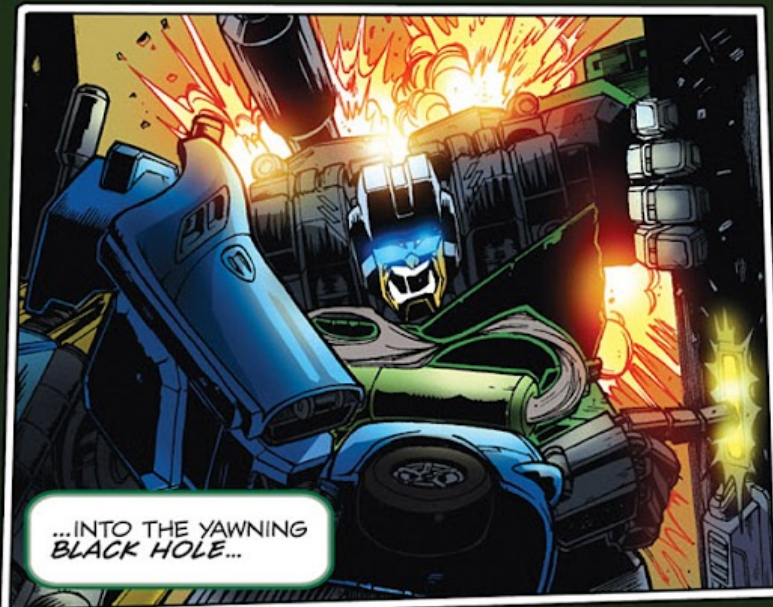


I FEEL A SUDDEN,
LURCHING TUG, ALL THE
WAY FROM MY *SPARK*,
AS IF I'M SUDDENLY
CAUGHT IN A VORTEX...



...PULLING ME IN, DOWN...

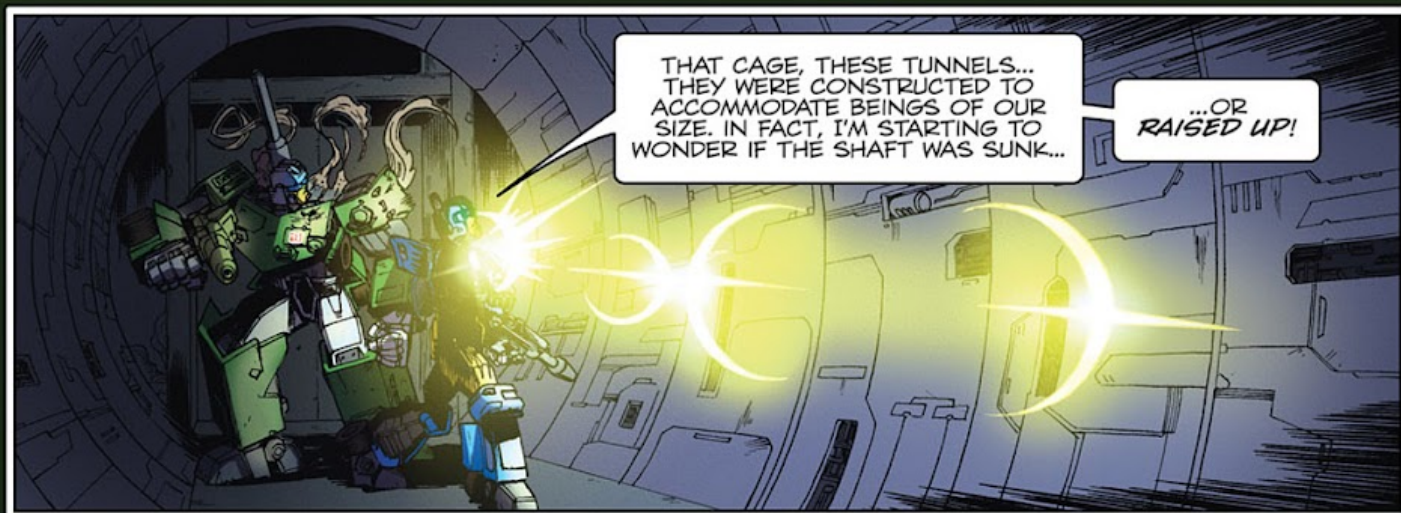
HURRY!



...INTO THE YAWNING
BLACK HOLE...



...I CALL MY FUTURE.



THAT CAGE, THESE TUNNELS...
THEY WERE CONSTRUCTED TO
ACCOMMODATE BEINGS OF OUR
SIZE. IN FACT, I'M STARTING TO
WONDER IF THE SHAFT WAS SUNK...

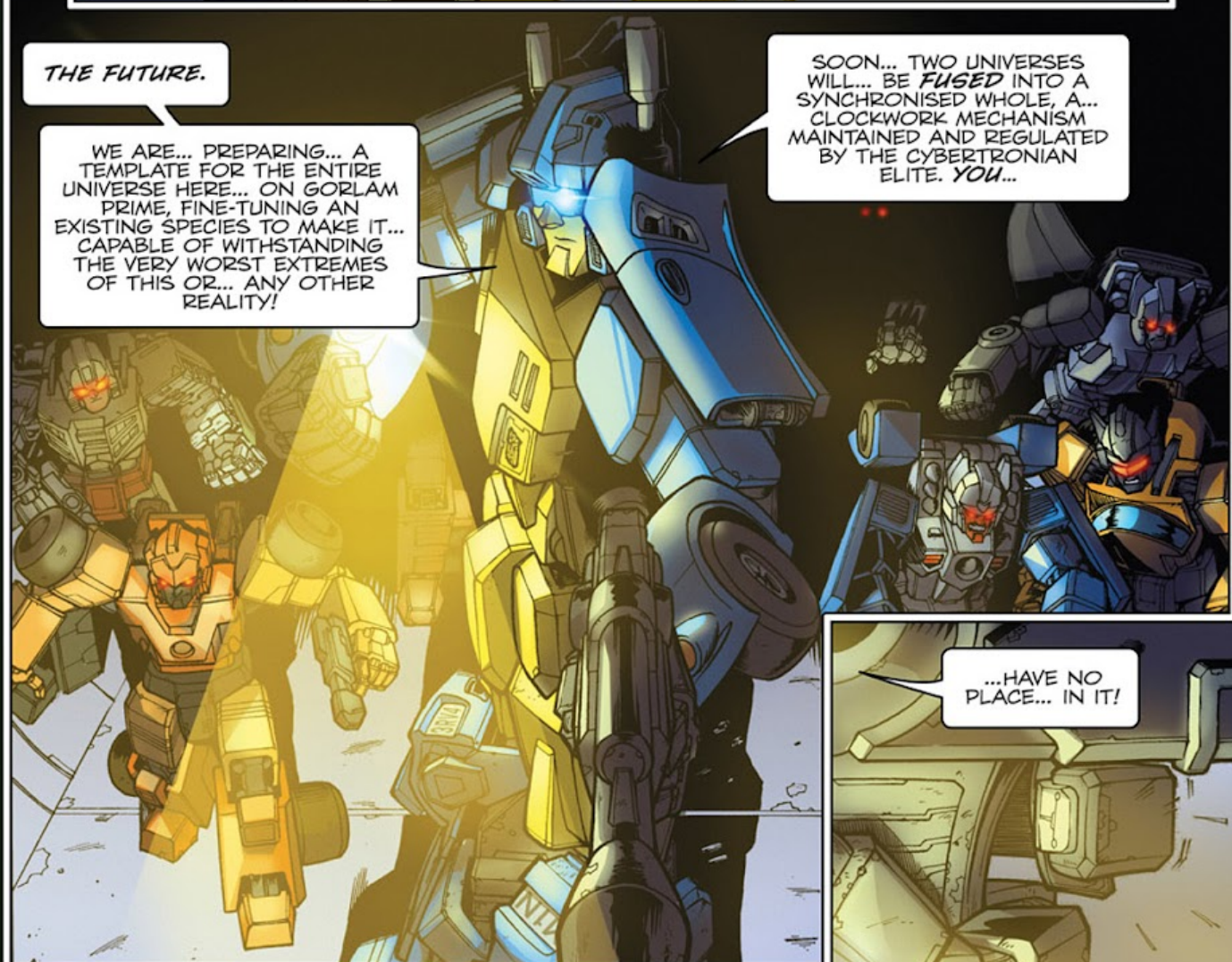
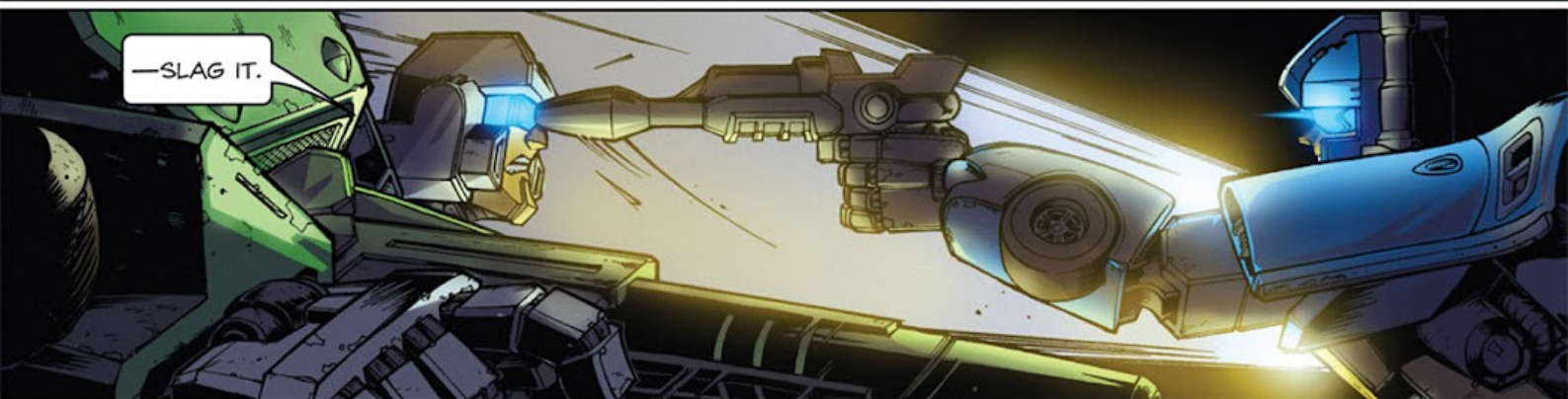
...OR
RAISED UP!



ANYTHING
COMING BACK
TO YOU?

NO. YES.
MAYBE.

IT'S AS IF...
I KNOW WHERE
TO GO. WHAT
DIRECTION TO
TAKE. BUT I CAN'T
SEE WHAT'S CO—



THE ORCIBE
CLUSTER:



YES, I'M
IMPRESSED.



SCANNING FOR
LIFESIGNS:



H-UH...

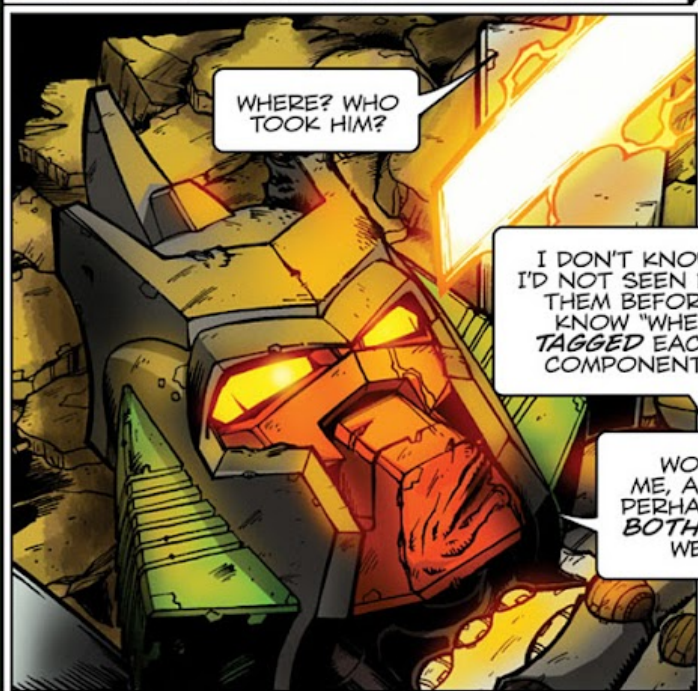
...WHO?



TELL ME WHAT
HAPPENED HERE,
BANZAITRON...

...OR I SWEAR
I'LL **FINISH** WHAT
THEY STARTED!

AR-ARCEE? IF
YOU'RE LOOKING FOR
MONSTRUCTOR, YOU'RE
TOO LATE. THEY... ACTIVATED
HIM SOMEHOW. HE'S GONE.



WHERE? WHO
TOOK HIM?

I DON'T KNOW "WHO."
I'D NOT SEEN EITHER OF
THEM BEFORE. BUT I
KNOW "WHERE." WE
TAGGED EACH OF ITS
COMPONENT PARTS.

WORK WITH
ME, ARCEE, AND
PERHAPS WE CAN
BOTH GET WHAT
WE WANT.

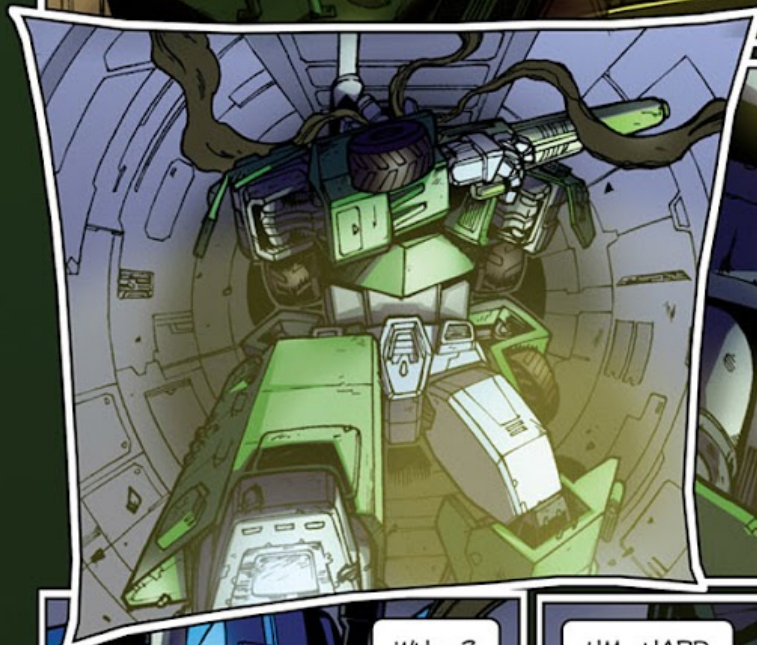


HN. IF THE
TRAIL LEADS
TO JHIAXUS...

...I'D FOLLOW
YOU INTO THE
ABYSS!

GORLAM PRIME:

VZOW



OW!



WH—?



UM...HARD.
HEAD.

IT'S *NOT*
JUST A NAME,
Y'KNOW.



K-KILL IT!



SOMEHOW, WHEN I
WASN'T LOOKING
MAYBE, THINGS
MOVED ON...

VOV
VOV

...AND LEFT
ME BEHIND!

THWOM

KRORCH

I HAVE TWO OPERATIONAL MODES:
BRUTAL... AND **DIRECT**. I CAN EVEN
RUN BOTH AT ONCE. BUT THERE REALLY
ISN'T MUCH MORE TO ME THAN THAT.

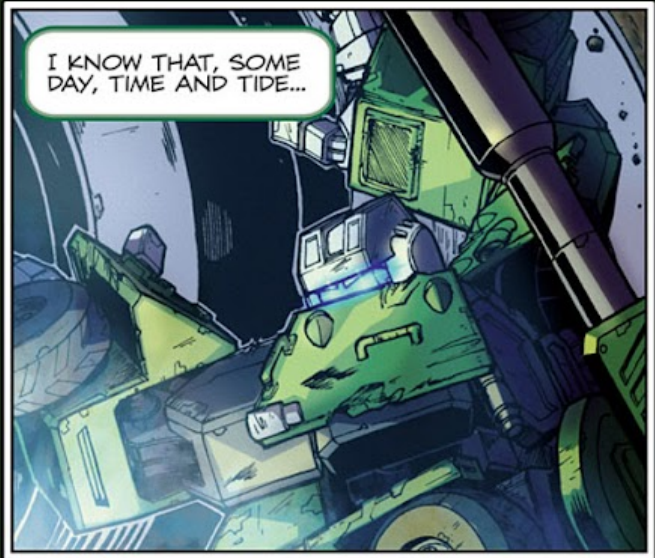
MY ROLE IS TO CLEAN
UP THE MESSSES, DO THE
DAMAGE LIMITATION. IN
THE VERNACULAR...

...I'M A **PROBLEM-SOLVER**.

I DO WHAT I HAVE
TO DO—HOWEVER
UGLY IT GETS—
AND GET OUT.



BUT *NOT* CLEAN.



I KNOW THAT, SOME DAY, TIME AND TIDE...



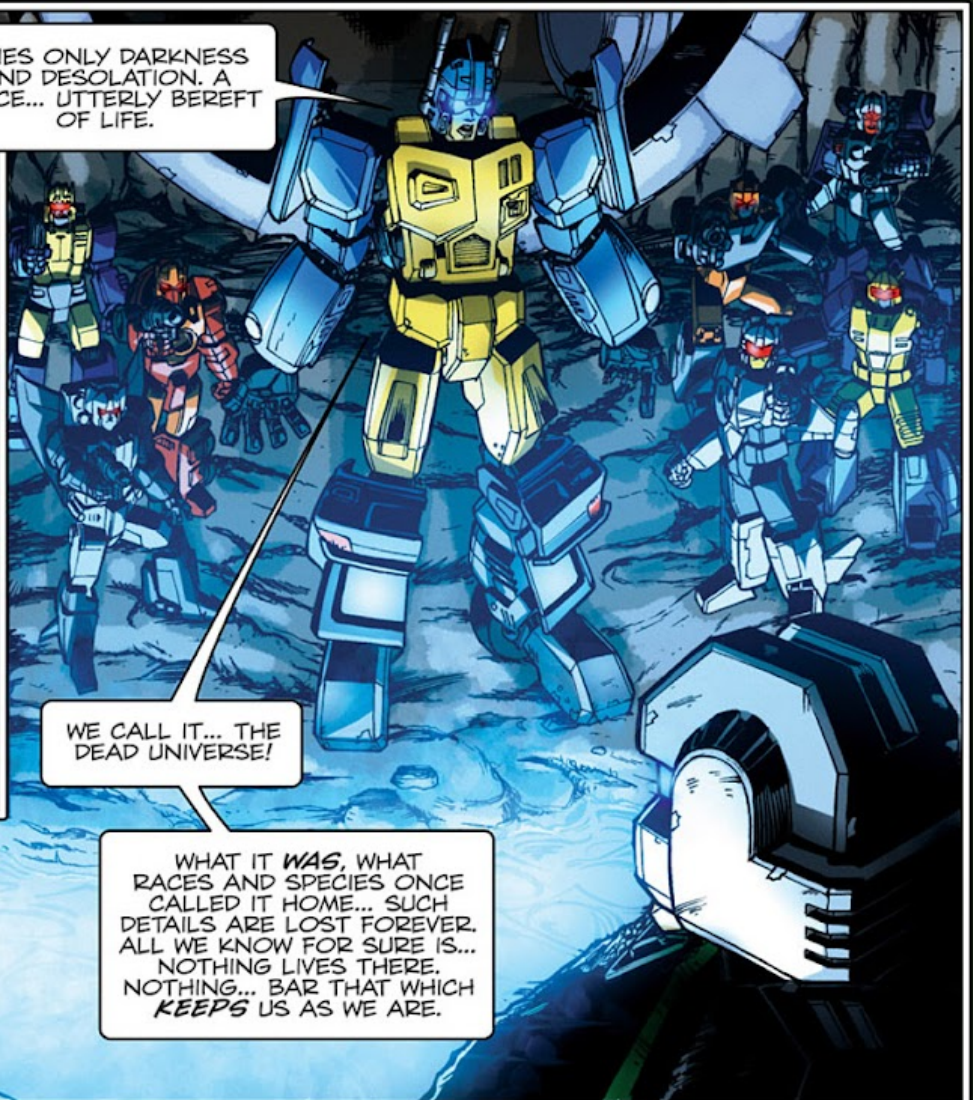
...WILL OVERTAKE ME.

WE'LL BE *BEYOND* ALL THIS PETTY STRIFE AND CONFLICT, AND I'LL BE A WALKING REMINDER OF WHAT USED TO BE: A SHAMEFUL SECRET TO BE QUIETLY DECOMMISSIONED.



THAT WAY...

...LIES ONLY DARKNESS AND DESOLATION. A PLACE... UTTERLY BEREFT OF LIFE.



WE CALL IT... THE DEAD UNIVERSE!

WHAT IT *WAS*, WHAT RACES AND SPECIES ONCE CALLED IT HOME... SUCH DETAILS ARE LOST FOREVER. ALL WE KNOW FOR SURE IS... NOTHING LIVES THERE. NOTHING... BAR THAT WHICH *KEEPS* US AS WE ARE.

ACCEPT THAT... YOUR TIME IS DONE... YOUR COURSE RUN... AND IT WILL BE QUICK. THE PAIN... MOMENTARY.

RESIST... AND YOUR SUFFERING SHALL... BE ETERNAL.



THERE.

I'M READY.



READY FOR WHATEVER'S NEXT. BE IT DEATH OR CHANGE OR SOMETHING IN BETWEEN.

I GO TO MEET MY DESTINY...





...HEAD ON!



NUHH!

WHAT?

THE DEAD
UNIVERSE:



HH-TT.

THE INSTRUMENT...
IS GONE. GONE!



THIS
NECESSITATES A
CONFRONTATION I
HAD WISHED TO DEFER
UNTIL IT WAS FAR TOO
LATE TO AFFECT THE
EXPANSION IN ANY WAY,
SHAPE OR FORM. IT
SEEMS I MUST DO WHAT
NIGHTBEAT WAS
MEANT TO...



...AND *ELIMINATE*
OPTIMUS PRIME.

THE BENZULI
EXPANSE:

IT'S GONE...

WHAT DO
YOU MEAN,
"GONE"?

I MEAN, NOT
THERE ANYMORE.
THE WHOLE
SYSTEM—PLANETS,
STARS, THE LOT!

AND IN ITS
PLACE A BIG
NOTHING.

IT'S UNLIKE
ANYTHING I'VE
EVER SEEN, JETFIRE,
AND WE'RE GETTING
ZERO TELEMETRY
BACK FROM IT.

PROBES?
DRONES?

CEASE TO
FUNCTION AS
SOON AS THEY
CROSS THE EVENT
HORIZON. AND I
HAVE THE NAGGING
SUSPICION, WERE WE
TO TRY, THE SAME
WOULD HAPPEN
TO US.

HM.

I WONDER.

CLOUDBURST—
YOU, LANDMINE,
GROUNDBREAKER,
AND WAVERIDER...

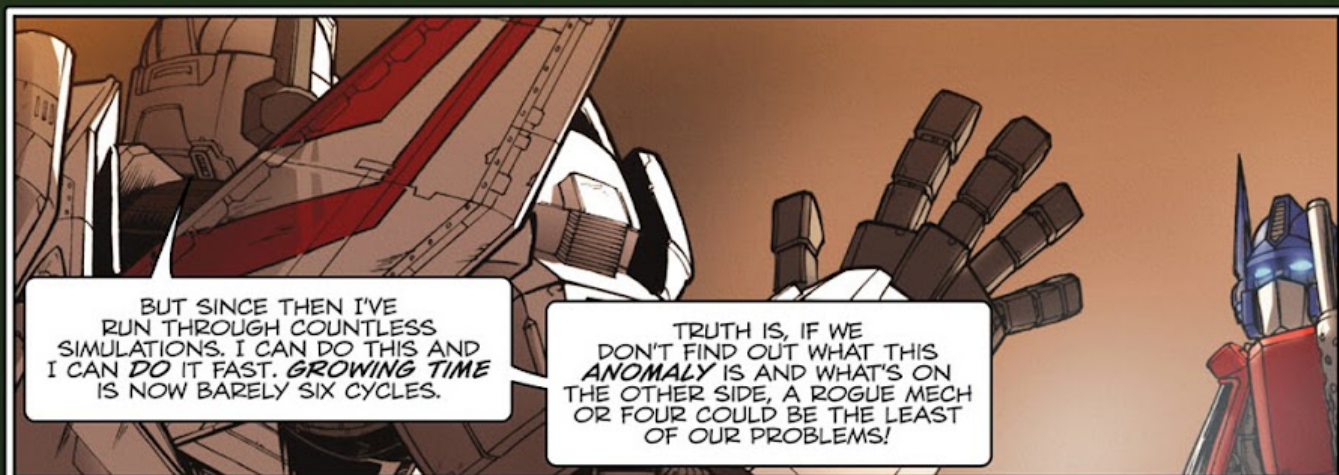
...JUST
VOLUNTEERED!



GARRUS-9:

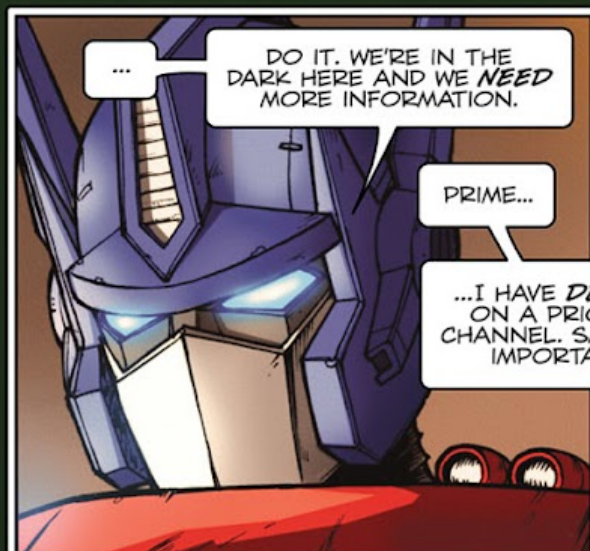
I'M JUST NOT SURE, JETFIRE. EVEN WITH ALL THE REFINEMENTS AND UPGRADES... WELL, WE'VE SEEN FIRSTHAND WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THIS TECHNOLOGY GOES BAD.

I KNOW, PRIME, I KNOW.



BUT SINCE THEN I'VE RUN THROUGH COUNTLESS SIMULATIONS. I CAN DO THIS AND I CAN DO IT FAST. *GROWING TIME* IS NOW BARELY SIX CYCLES.

TRUTH IS, IF WE DON'T FIND OUT WHAT THIS *ANOMALY* IS AND WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE, A ROGUE MECH OR FOUR COULD BE THE LEAST OF OUR PROBLEMS!



DO IT. WE'RE IN THE DARK HERE AND WE *NEED* MORE INFORMATION.

PRIME...

...I HAVE *DEALER* ON A PRIORITY CHANNEL. SAYS IT'S IMPORTANT.



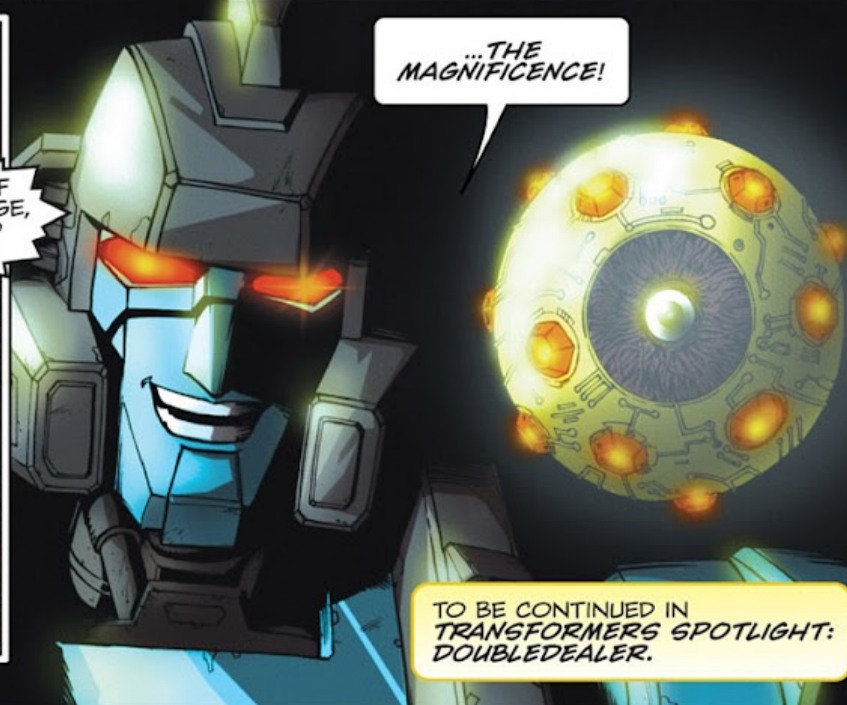
DEALER?

GO AHEAD, *SEARCHLIGHT*. PUT HIM THROUGH.



OPTIMUS PRIME, I'VE BEEN MONITORING YOUR CURRENT SITUATION AND I THINK I HAVE THE ANSWER. OR, RATHER, I KNOW WHERE THE ANSWERS LIE.

THE FONT OF ALL KNOWLEDGE, KNOWN AND UNKNOWN...



...*THE* MAGNIFICENCE!

TO BE CONTINUED IN *TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT: DOUBLEDEALER*.

The REVELATION saga continues next month
featuring...

DOUBLEDEALER



THE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT: HARDHEAD

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REVELATION: PART TWO

HARDHEAD